

Minutes of the SOC Revision Steering Group (SRSG) Meeting

7 December 2016

11.00 – 13.00

ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ

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| **Attendees:** |  |
| **Members** |  |
| Pete Brodie (PB) Chair | ONS |
| Anna Carlsson-Hyslop (AC-H) delegated by Stephanie Freeth | Dept for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) |
| Andy Darnton (AD)  audio | Health & Safety Executive (HSE) |
| Bryan Halka (BH)  audio | Dept for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) |
| Charlie Ball (CB) | Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) |
| Chris Daffin (CD)  audio | ONS |
| Craiger Solomon (CS)  audio | Welsh Government |
| Daniel Sandford-Smith (DSS) | Gatsby Foundation |
| Doug Rendle (DR) | HM Treasury |
| Penny Allen (PA) delegated by Mary Gregory  audio | Dept for Culture, Media & Sport |
| Peter Hounsome (PH) | The Tech Partnership |
| Rachel Hewitt (RH) | The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) |
| Venetia Haynes (VH)  audio | National Records of Scotland |
| Zoe Proctor (ZP)  audio | Ministry of Defence |
| **Classification and Harmonisation Representatives (CHU)** |  |
| Charlie Wroth-Smith (CWS) | ONS |
| Michaela Morris (MM) | ONS |
| Steve Cooley (SC) | ONS |
| Kerry Smith (KS) Secretariat | ONS |
| **Apologies:** |  |
| Chris White | ONS |

1. **Welcome and Introduction – Pete Brodie**

PB welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting of the Standard Occupational Classification Revision Steering Group (SRSG). PB suggested a slight change in the agenda, swapping agenda item 3 and 2 as it seemed natural for members to introduce themselves before moving on to the rest of the agenda.

1. **Roundtable – background of steering group members and interest in SOC**

All members introduced themselves and gave a brief background into their interest and/or use of the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

PB – Divisional Deputy Director for Survey, Methodology and Statistical Computing at ONS, Chair of the SRSG.

AD – HSE have an interest in categorizing workers into groups carrying out similar tasks, for the purposes of producing statistics on work place injury, ill health and disease.

BH – Work in the National Minimum Wage team, looking at wage data broken down by occupational groups. Will be taking forward some of the changes planned to SOC to the wider department and will hopefully have feedback from BEIS to feed into the revision.

CD – ONS Data Collection Directorate has an interest in how the data for occupation will be collected and used.

CS – Head of Economic, Labour Market and Transport Statistics within the Welsh Government. Interest from a user’s perspective, analysing occupation data, feeding into labour intelligence groups and economic strategy and curriculum development.

PA – Interest in whether the occupations within our industries are reflected in SOC, of which some currently aren’t, such as the digital industries.

VH – Interest from a Census point of view, use SOC codes in Census data.

ZP – Awareness of what is happening with SOC as SOC codes are used when reporting on employment of veterans. There have been recent statements in the press on the types of employment veterans are entering so will be doing more work in this area in the future.

CWS – Head of CHU at ONS, custodians of SOC.

DR – Head of Labour Market Analysis at HM Treasury interested in gaining a good understanding of the nature of occupations across the economy. Carry out a lot of labour market analysis using ASHE and LFS data of which occupation is a key component.

RH – HESA use their own version of SOC in their survey of graduate destinations, which is currently undergoing a review.

AC-H – Work in the English Housing Survey within DCLG, SOC is valuable within their surveys.

DSS – Involved in the Sainsbury review of skills, The Gatsby Foundation are taking some work forward looking at how occupations might be assigned to routes, and whether SOC codes could be used to do this. Also interested in whether SOC codes can be used in careers advice to describe the occupational labour market to young people.

CB – Labour Market Analyst for the higher education sector within HECSU, involved in careers and employability work, also Strategic Policy Advisor to The Higher Education Funding Council for England.

PH – The Tech Partnership is responsible for producing a variety of primary and secondary reports on the IT and Digital sector, interested in ensuring SOC codes fully represents the range of occupations within this employment area.

KS – Classifications Helpdesk Manager within CHU, who are responsible for updating and revising the SOC index.

MM – Classifications Manager within CHU, who are responsible for updating and revising the SOC index. Also the project lead for the SOC2010 revision.

SC – Researcher within CHU, hoping to get a good steer from the group on producing a good classification.

1. **Minutes of last meeting and actions - Pete Brodie**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. All actions have now been completed.

**ACTION 1 – Secretariat to change action point 3 to completed.**

1. **Presentation on the background on who was awarded the contract – Charlie Wroth-Smith**

CWS ran through the background of the contract award and minimum requirements for the SOC2010 revision. (See Annex B for full details).

Questions and Comments:

* PH: How will the revised SOC2010 index fit with ISCO08?

ISCO is revised every 20 years so ISCO08 is not due to be revised until 2028, but there is a possibility of a minor revision. Peter Elias is keen for SOC to become more aligned with ISCO08

* CS: From a user’s point of view, when will the revised SOC index be incorporated into such outputs as ASHE and LFS? It would be useful for users to have confirmation from ASHE and LFS on when they expect to start using the revised index.
* Will the deliverables change due to changes in technology/transformation, i.e. will there be hard copies or digital copies?

The revised SOC2010 index will be available for use in ASHE and LFS after it has been published. As ASHE is an annual survey it is likely that 2020 would be the first year the revised SOC index is used.

We have a year built into the timeline for developing and producing outputs and will be talking to users about what they want, however we expect there to be no hard copies of the index this time around.

* DSS: Has the use of big data been considered for use in research?

During this phase of the project we will be looking at what data is available and won’t just be using the same sources as we did 10 years ago

* DR: Thought needs to be given the process of transition from SOC2010 to SOC2020 for users, is there a lookup table to help manage the transition? What about Dual coding, it would have been useful for the LFS data to be dual coded after the last revision.

User Guide 22 will provide a mapping from SOC2010 to SOC2020. We are aware that consistency and compatibility are important to users.

**ACTION 2 – Chris Daffin to investigate when dual coding of the LFS data will be completed**

1. **Presentation on the methodology of the SOC revision – Steve Cooley (ONS)**

SC explained the proposed methodology that had been discussed at the inception meeting with NatCen and IER. (See Annex B for full details).

Questions and Comments about using other sources:

* DSS: Gatsby Foundation have been talking to employment agencies about using their data for careers and would suggest speaking to employment agencies such as Reed Employment Services who have difficulty using SOC. NESTA have done some work with Burning Glass data, using machine coding. It might be useful to look at the coding they are using when thinking about how job titles fit together.

We are speaking to the Big Data team within ONS as they are working on a web scraping project. They are also part of the ESSnet Project and are also looking at web scraping internationally and Burning Glass has previously come up.

* CB: Suggest looking at the Employer Skills Survey as it links employment data with skills data.
* PH: The Tech Partnership uses IC Jobs Watch who use direct feeds from companies, picking up 160,000 jobs per quarter, but have difficulty assigning approximately 50% to a job title within SOC. Need to be wary of web scraping jobs as there could be issues with quality of data.

Quality of data is one of the issues that will be looked at when considering web scraping.

* CB: There are issues with labour market information in this country around the lack of detail under job titles and level of education. Mapping SOC to O\*Net would highlight areas where job titles aren’t detailed enough?

CHU at ONS are currently working on mapping SOC to the US SOC, it is almost ready and it is anticipated that this will be published.

* VH: Raised concerns over the Scottish Census data being shared.

A 1% subsample of Scottish Census data currently held by CHU and is only used internally by us for research purposes through a data access agreement. MM has contacted NRS for permission for NatCen and IER to have access to the data but to date has not had a response.

* PH: Is the Gold Coding based on line descriptors given by respondents?

Job title, job description, industry, qualifications etc are all considered before assigning the appropriate SOC2010 code.

**ACTION 3 – Michaela Morris to send Venetia Haynes a copy of the email regarding data access.**

Questions/Comments on the planned methodology:

* PH: Is pleased that we are trying to align with ISCO08, particularly in regard to jobs within the IT sector, of which ISCO08 have many more in their classification and it is an area we are falling behind on. It is important that we involve stakeholders as much as we did last time. Care needs to be taken not to get bogged down implementing the 10,000 criteria1 in order to create a new unit group. Whilst it can be used by ONS and other organisations to go into much greater detail we need to give people a framework they can use to assign jobs to different categories.

We will be adopting a similar approach as last time; we need to ensure the index is reflective of the data we hold. Both PH and CB are both stakeholders and steering group members so will be involved in stakeholder engagement.

* DSS: Supports PH last comment, it has been an issue in some of the work that The Gatsby Foundation has done where a lot of employers do not recognise SOC codes and do not understand what they are, which has resulted in them using an alternative list of occupations as described by apprenticeships. It is important to think about engagement with employers who are not firsthand users of SOC, as it is important they can recognise their employees within the SOC index.

1 10,000 criteria is the minimum requirement for related job titles in the 2011 Census data, for the creation of a new unit group and the maintenance of an existing unit group.

* DSS: In regard to the qualification issues, there is a fair amount of graduate substitution in the workplace for example if you look,barista comes up as a graduate occupation.
* CB: There are some areas where graduates are going into non graduate jobs, however with the experience of the people involved in the revision and the research carried out this will not be an issue as we will be able to identify the occupations where this happens.

1. **Presentation on stakeholder identification and engagement – Michaela Morris**

MM explained the approach that CHU took to identify and include stakeholders in the revision process. (See Annex B for full details).

Suggestions for other stakeholders:

* The group asked for an annonymised list of stakeholders to be circulated for them to review and suggest other possible stakeholders.

**ACTION 4 – Michaela Morris to provide list of current stakeholders to be circulated with minutes of the meeting.**

**ACTION 5 – All SRSG members to consider other possible stakeholders and let Michaela Morris know.**

Engagement questions/comments:

* DSS: There is no list of professional organisations available but he has a list of professional bodies by SOC from some work done within The Gatsby Foundation which he can provide.
* CB: There are always going to be issues when engaging with industry stakeholders, as there is conflict between industry and occupation.
* DSS: It would be useful to have a framework that isn’t necessary for the production of statistics. Gatsby has just recently undertaken some work with the Sector Skill Council on occupation matching for engineering, where the same job title could have been used as there is not enough granularity in SOC, and they are not able to produce their own framework independently. Having a more granular framework would help to understand educational requirements and to help people move between industries.
* CB: And for conversion to those industries.
* PB: Our current stakeholders are users or people who have an interest in SOC, we could be missing users who could be using SOC but do not currently use it and we need to think about how we reach them.
* PH: Whilst the SOC lookup is useful, we need to think about the framework, to allow for better use and flexibility when assigning codes. There needs to be a sufficient number of groups so users can easily assign a job to a SOC code, perhaps an additional hierarchy such as HESA use?
* PB: It is important to get the balance right, it is not possible for everyone using the SOC index to have an input, but by extending its use, more data becomes available to enable accurate coding.
* DSS: It would be useful to speak to the Local Enterprise Partnership about how they use of SOC codes, they use occupational data to look at what the skills make up is.

**ACTION 6 – Daniel Sandford-Smith to send list of professional bodies by SOC code to Michaela Morris.**

**ACTION 7 – Contact LEP about use of SOC.**

1. **Update on NS-SEC – Charlie Wroth-Smith**

ONS are the custodians of the National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (NS-SEC) which is dependent on SOC so this will also need to be revised. Work has started on looking at the revision process for this work. ONS will be carrying out an exercise to look at the different data we can use to measure employment relations. The timescale for the revised NS-SEC is similar to that of SOC as it is required by Census. An update will be provided at the next steering group meeting.

1. **Any other business**

* VH: It would be useful for those members in the room say their name before they speak for the benefit of those members dialling in.
* CB: Had received a proposal from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BSRC) about a classification for technical specialists, primarily at doctoral level, who do not currently fit easily within the SOC framework.

This would need to be forwarded to classifications unit at ONS to consider in the revision, through the stakeholder engagement process.

* PH: There is an absence of codes for data professions.

Any evidence should be sent to classifications unit for consideration in the revision.

* PB: ONS currently sets the agenda for the meetings, if any members have any agenda items please let the secretariat know prior to the meeting. The meeting has been useful; there has been a lot of engagement from members and ideas to be taken forward.

**ACTION 8 – Charlie Ball to forward copy of proposal from the BBSRC to CHU**

**ACTION 9 – All to let secretariat know of any agenda items prior to meetings.**

1. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 27 April 2017 at ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ, 11.30 – 1.30pm. Audio and video conference facilities will be available and will be sent nearer the time.

**Annexes:**

1. List of Actions
2. Presentations

**Annex A**

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| **ACTIONS FROM THE SRSG MEETING – 7 December 2016** | | | | |
| **Action No** | **Agenda Item No** | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Status** |
| 1 | 3 | Update Action point 3 from last minutes as complete | Kerry Smith | Completed |
| 2 | 4 | To investigate when dual coding of the LFS data will be completed | Chris Daffin |  |
| 3 | 5 | Send copy of request for data sharing subsample of Scottish Census data to Venetia Haynes | Michaela Morris | Completed |
| 4 | 6 | Circulate list of current stakeholders to steering group members | Michaela Morris/Kerry Smith | Completed |
| 5 | 6 | Consider other possible stakeholders and forward suggestions to Michaela Morris | All |  |
| 6 | 6 | Send list of professional bodies by SOC code to Michaela Morris | Daniel Sandford-Smith |  |
| 7 | 6 | Contact Local Enterprise Partnership | NatCen |  |
| 8 | 8 | Forward copy of proposal from the BBSRC to CHU | Charlie Ball | Completed, Michaela to forward to NatCen along with updated stakeholder responses. |
| 9 | 8 | Consider agenda items for future meetings | All |  |

**Annex B**

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| Slide 1 |  |  |
| Slide 2 |  | Just go through a quick recap of the minimum requirements for the SOC2010 revision which we agreed at the last steering group meeting.  After the steering group meeting we put this work out to tender to ensure we had the best possible labour market expertise for the revision. |
| Slide 3 |  | After a procurement process we awarded the contract to the joint bid from Natcen and the University of Warwick Institute of Employment Research (IER). NatCen are the lead contractors but will subcontract to the IER to ultilise their labour market expertise.  NatCen are a large independent social research agency who have a lot of experience of working on government projects. NatCen is a regular user of the SOC and SIC code frames for both coding and analysis across a large number of social surveys, including a number with National Statistics status.  IER were responsible for the introduction of SOC90 as the first standard occupational classification in the UK and have worked with the ONS on two subsequent revisions of the classification (SOC2000 and SOC2010). They also have a vast amount of experience internationally especially with helping to implement ISCO08 into a range of different countries. ISCO08 is the international standard of occupational classification.  Support will be also be given from the ONS, specifically the Classifications and Harmonisation Unit. As custodians of SOC we have strong experience of the issues which have arisen from SOC2010 and a broad understanding of our user needs. |
| Slide 4 |  | **An update to SOC volume 1**  This is the key document that provides the structure of the index and descriptions of each of the unit groups. These descriptions include an overall description, typical entry routes and qualifications, a summary of the tasks undertaken, and related job titles.  **An update to SOC volume 2**  Volume 2 (known as the coding index) includes the detailed set of job titles and associated unit group codes  **An article describing the revision process**  It will cover the purpose and uses of SOC, the background to the review, the methodology, main a summary of main changes  **Guidance on how SOC2020 maps on to ISCO08**  We will do this by producing a look-up table and description of the mapping. This will be done using the database held by IER together with input from ONS staff.  **User Guide 22**  This guide will provide an overview of the main changes, along with tables that show the relationship between the two sets of classifications. |
| Slide 5 |  | This proposed timeline is only provisional and not set in stone. |
| Slide 6 |  | * proposing to adopt an agile approach to the project. * We know that ultimately we’ll produce SOC 2020, but the method for how we undertake this work and the steps we carry out are going to be constantly assessed and reviewed. |
| Slide 7 |  | * need large datasets to enable research to take place.   At the moment we have use of:  1% 2011 Census Subsample  16 Labour Force Survey Quarters  Destination of the Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) data from HESA  And potentially have access to:  Scottish Census Records.  hold the data, but permission to use it needs to be obtained.  investigating getting access to:  Northern Ireland Census or LFS data   * SOC is a UK classification and we want to make sure that’s reflected. |
| Slide 8 |  | CHU will be undertaking a ‘gold coding exercise’, - expert coders looking at assigned occupation codes and making determinations if accurate or need changing.  Gold Coding the Census subsample (almost completed) and approximately 195k LFS records, The Census subsample is used to get the biggest snap shot possible of the population, with LFS used in support to capture more recent job titles. The remaining data will be used to support decisions and provide evidence of new job titles.    May be able to use web scraping to gather job titles from job websites, but research would first be needed to better understand the value this could add NatCen have also collected their own information from other social survey data which may feed into the revision.    Variables - job title, job description, industry text and code, qualifications as the main variables. Also hope to use variables on management and supervisor status.    In addition to all this data, the Classifications team are constantly maintaining a record of new job titles which are researched and if acceptable are included in the dynamic SOC index. The dynamic index is constantly updated with new job titles identified from records in the Census, Annual Survey of Hours and Earning, Life Events data, so births and deaths, and general queries received by the classifications helpdesk? |
| Slide 9 |  | First SOC Revision Working Group meeting will be held in March, The objective of these meetings is to discuss research undertaken by the teams, address stakeholder comments, and ultimately propose changes to the classification which will go out for stakeholder comment and steering group approval.  Starting with MG1 and working in parallel with key sectors that have been identified since the last revision, such as the creative industries..    Subject to input from stakeholders and SRSG, be working down the major groups, but if information we receive during the revision makes any other groups or sectors a higher priority then focus can move to those.  At meetings we will be taking research conducted by NatCen and CHU, along with stakeholder requests, and will be investigating if any new groupings would be sufficiently populated. Once the size threshold has been reached, then we look at skills and roles of the job. An example of this for the last revision is care workers and senior care workers. At the request of a stakeholder we investigated splitting them out into 2 groups. Research found that each group would be sufficiently populated, and that tasks suitably differed. Once size and task criteria were satisfied we put out the proposal to stakeholders. We’re proposing to adopt the same methodology for this revision, but we’ll be constantly reviewing its effectiveness. |
| Slide 10 |  | Throughout the revision we will be referring to ISCO 08, which is the International Standard Classification of Occupations, revised in 2008, to see if there is an opportunity to further align with it.    In addition to revising the structure of SOC, we will also be revising SOC volume 1. There have been requests for more detailed skills added, comparable to O\*net, which is a US website that supplies information on skills and knowledge linked to US SOC, and this is something we’ll investigate as part of the revision.  Use information such as qualifications data, internet research, including O\*net, and stakeholder feedback (most likely sector skills councils) to ensure that we have the most accurate information possible without making volume 1 too onerous to use or too prescriptive that it makes allocation of new job titles problematic. |
| Slide 11 |  |  |
| Slide 12 |  | The classifications and harmonisation unit hold a list of stakeholders that has been developed over time, but obviously this becomes quickly out of date  Our stakeholders are really important to us as they have an in depth knowledge of their industry or areas of specialism…. they can also inform us about new policies, such as the new nursing apprenticeships that was recently announced. So our stakeholders are key to helping us with the revision process.  Last year we ran a complete check of our list. We asked people if they still had an interest in SOC and wished to stay on the list, and if they didn’t…. could they suggest someone else. In a lot of cases we received a 'recipient not known‘ email so we contacted the organisation to get an alternative person, and we do this regularly  We also contacted the list of organisations that contributed to the last revision and let them know about the upcoming consultation. Many were on the existing list, but in some cases organisations had merged or their names had changed so we found new contacts. And we also got in touch with members of the Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards…… and all the UK professional organisations.  If customers are interested in SOC developments or seem knowledgeable about areas of SOC…. we ask them if they would like to be included on the list |
| Slide 13 |  | When the consultation went live….as well as emailing our stakeholders, we also used social media such a twitter……we advertised on various external websites (including NI and Scotland). And we advertised within ONS….because of course …. we are a major user of SOC  Everyone that responded to the consultation was automatically added to the stakeholder list |
| Slide 14 |  | As much as we have tried to reach out to users of SOC, there are bound to interested organisations that were   * Either not aware of the consultation * or because they may not realise the significance of how changes to SOC may effect them.   One way we overcame this in the last revision …..was to seek out other organisations and inform them of any changes we’re proposing to make. An example of this is where the term ‘traffic warden’ was in decline, so we proposed to merge this group some of the jobs in car park attendants and elementary security occupations to make parking and civil enforcement occupations. We contacted the British Parking Associationto inform them….. and as a consequence they became a stakeholder and contributed to the decisions made for that new group |
| Slide 15 |  | It’s been agreed that ONS will lead on stakeholder engagement….but at times it will be more efficient for NatCen to deal with them directly, especially when updating the information in SOC volume 1 – which is the structure and descriptions of the unit groups  Our immediate next step is to email our stakeholders to let them know that the contract has been awarded and who it’s been awarded to  As Steve has mentioned previously we suggest that at every working group we will look at key sectors of the labour market in parallel with the MG by MG approach, and that we are planning to liaise with stakeholders for their comments on the areas we’ll be working on in advance of the meetings…. These comments will then feed into any decisions made. At the end of each stage we will circulate a copy of a review paper that will be produced by NatCen……again for comments which will then feed into the round |
| Slide 16 |  | When updating SOC volume 1 we will send the appropriate sections to the relevant organisations, professional bodies and skills sectors agencies. It’s really important to ensure they’re engaged ……even if we're not changing the sections relevant to them…… they still need to be involved to make sure we're accurately reflecting their industries. |
| Slide 17 |  | Purpose of SOC….users aren’t always aware that SOC was created for the production of statistics and use it for their own needs. So we can’t always give them what they want.  In the previous revision DWP requested a new minor group (that’s at the 3 digit level) and within that 9 new unit groups solely for the Adult Entertainment Industry. This was because Jobcentre Plus had no reliable way of identifying vacancies within the industry.  It was decided that the creation of separate groups wouldn’t be possible. This was because in some cases there weren’t sufficient numbers to populate the groups, and that SOC is an occupational classification and we’re trying to make it less industry dependant. Also many of the job titles are already in the index such as ‘Bar and Waiting Staff ‘ and because jobs are grouped together according to their skill level and specialism,….a barman or waiter are coded the same regardless of where they work and a glamour model in SOC is still just a model!......Though we did conduct some research and included some acceptable job titles within the industry, such as pole dancer and table dancer.  Also, to make changes to SOC we need tangible information to back it up, this could be through the data we hold or our own research but in some cases we rely on stakeholders to supply us with evidence on why changes should be made, and they aren’t always forthcoming. |